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ABSTRACT

This document discusses a rationale and alternative strategies for teaching about China. Topics include China as: (1) a communist nation; (2) as a developing economic and political power; (3) as a country with a rich historical and traditional culture; and (4) as a powerful contrast to Eurocentrism. Ideas and institutions are suggested as a core for course planning and development. Outlines for classroom topics such as: (1) the nation, (2) the family, (3) education, (4) social relationships, and (5) China in the classroom are described. Topics of discussion of the conference working groups included lesson plans for teaching about Chinese language, culture, art, and history, Chinese youth and leisure activities. One group discussed the goals of such a course and how to achieve them in a planned segment of eight classroom hours. A list of materials for use in designing a module for teaching about China for grades 8 through 12 is provided. (NL)

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22nd Council of Europe Teachers' Seminar on "Teaching about China in secondary schools in Western Europe"

Donaueschingen, 7-12 November 1983

Report

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Strasbourg
1984

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Report on the 22nd European Teachers' Seminar

"Teaching about China in secondary schools in Western Europe"

Donaueschingen, Federal Republic of Germany,
7-12 November 1983

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The discussion paper, which was circulated to participants in advance of the seminar (Section 2), concluded with the confident prediction made by the American sinologue, W A P Martin, in 1886 that, within one or two centuries, China would become what we would today call a superpower and that Chinese history and culture would become a necessary element in Western education with Chinese language and literature taught in every university.

Martin was only one among many Westerners of his own time and since who have believed that one of the world's greatest civilisations and states would not be forever sunk in backwardness and chaos but would sooner or later take its rightful place among the handful of powers which would play a major part in shaping the future course of world history.

As we look back over the time which has elapsed since Martin wrote, we can see that his prophecy has been realised in some degree. The worst, it is true, was yet to come in the shape of the Warlord period and the Sino-Japanese and civil wars. Nevertheless, in 1949, China was united under a strong central government for the first time for more than half a century and decisively resumed the march towards modernisation and development. Today, despite considerable, largely self-inflicted setbacks, China has become a power to be reckoned with on the international political scene and is poised to make an impact in the world economy.

This perception of China as a great power and potential superpower with a quarter of humanity within its borders is evidently common to curriculum planners and teachers in much of Europe since China figures in secondary school curricula of most of the countries represented at Donaueschingen. It is generally found in the framework of geography and history or both, although in most cases only a very small amount of time is allotted to it.

The majority of particpants therefore were teaching China in one context or another and had useful experience and informed views to exchange. A small number also had first-hand experience of the People's Republic and two of them excellent Chinese, which greatly enriched group discussion.

It is not surprising that, in discussion, participants did not dwell upon the issue of justification, since there was general agreement that China should form part of the European secondary curriculum. They preferred to move on to consider in some detail what the content of a course on China for the average European secondary school graduate should be. The group reports contain their suggestions. They were not written in the expectation that they will be incorporated en bloc into European secondary school curricula, but as a serious and considered contribution to European thinking on what a secondary school course on China should contain, if European pupils are to achieve a worthwhile understanding of that country's full significance.

1.2 JUSTIFICATIONS: WHY TEACH ABOUT CHINA?

There would seem to be two main approaches to justifying teaching about China in European secondary schools: one based on the view that education should be directly relevent to the contemporary world, the other deriving from broader educational considerations.

2.1 Contemporary relevence

On the assumption that secondary school students should be prepared for the world in which they are to live and - one hopes - work, the case for teaching about China is strong. The People's Republic contains almost a quarter of the human race, and, while still poor and backward, it is a great power which is destined to play an increasingly important role in the world political system. The two superpowers are already compelled to take China into account in framing their foreign and defence policies, and it can be argued that one of the key configurations in international relations is the Washington-Moscow-Beijing triangle.

China is also likely to become a formidable force in the world economy in the foreseeable future. A current American view is as follows:

> "Chinese industry is the ultimate challenge to tomorrow's system of world trade, and, sooner or later, America must adjust to China's as it tries to adjust to Japan's."
> (Theodore H White, "Time" 26 September 1983)

What is true for America is equally true for Europe. Young Europeans cannot, therefore, afford to be ignorant of a nation and a state which are of major political significance today, whose political impact on tomorrow's world may well rival that of the USA and USSR, and whose economic impact could overshadow that of Japan.

2.2 Educational/cultural considerations

China is the home of a distinctive and advanced culture which evolved in relative isolation from other centres of advanced civilisation and whose political, economic, social and cultural development was consequently fundamentally different, in many respects, from that of Western societies. Moreover, China represented civilisation, per se, not only for the Chinese themselves but also for the people of East Asia and Indo-China.

In this context, China can be studied for two main reasons:

i. because of its importance for our understanding and appreciation of human experience. A knowledge of the main features of Chinese civilisation should arguably be part of any educated individual's cultural baggage in the latter part of the twentieth century. As Raymond Dawson argues ("The Chinese Chameleon", London 1967, p. 98):

> "To believe that enduring values of civilisation are linked solely with Europe and especially Western Europe, is simply to ignore the great merits of oriental civilisations, which were not without their own brands of political wisdom, as the history of the Chinese imperial bureaucracy amply testifies ... .";

ii. because, in the world of Etienne Balasz, China, is, in many respects, the "mirror-image" of Europe. The study of China can not only enlarge a student's cultural horizons but stimulate him into examining his own culture with fresh eyes. It is perhaps one of the best antidotes to Eurocentrism available to the teacher.

3. APPROACHES

3.1 Contemporary relevance

The focus for any study of China which is justified by arguments based on its contemporary, and likely future, political and economic relevance must surely be China since 1949, and there are a number of possible approaches or perspectives, which are not mutally exclusive eg:

i. China as a communist state

China can be approached as a communist state second in importance only to the Soviet Union and whose leaders achieved power largely by their own efforts. Among the topics that need to be examined are the Chinese adaptation of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, both to the problem of achieving power and to the creation of a state and the development of any economy afterwards; the break with the Soviet Union and the emergence of Maoism (a distinct ideology?) in the Great Leap Forward and its flowering in the Cultural Revolution.

ii. China as a developing country

China can be approached in the context of the Third World, and its experience of development examined. Here the point should be made that China is perhaps the first developing country. Its experience of consciously striven for development began not in 1949, 1928, or 1912 but during the 1860's and predates that of Japan. In this framework, the two strategies between which China has swung since 1949 need to be explained: the Soviet model and its modification as advocated by the "pragmatists" (Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun); and the Maoist radical revolutionary approach based on mass mobilisation and stressing political attitudes rather than technical expertise.

Whichever approach is adopted, however, whether it be one of the above or not, a key question is how much background knowledge a student needs in order to make sense of contemporary China.

Here it should be borne in mind that the Chinese are the most historically minded of the world's peoples. It would be surprising if they were not in view of the unbroken continuity of their culture. Their collective memory reaches back to long before the time of Confucius, and contemporary political problems are often debated in terms of analogous problems in their past.

If European students are to have a better than superficial understanding of China today, they must, therefore, be enabled to see it in Chinese terms. This means giving them at least some notion of China's traditional state system, its values and "Weltanschauung" and of the enormous cultural pride of the Chinese in their country as the centre of a great culture.

They must also have some understanding of developments in China since the impact of the West because the memory of the century and more of humiliation which it brought is burned deep in the consciousness of every

Chinese. One of the keys to understanding this period, which is still in many ways not yet at an end, is the Chinese quest for wealth and power. This has been the main preoccupation in the modern period regardless of the prevailing political ideology.

3.2 Education and cultural considerations

An approach which justifies the study of China under this heading will try to present Chinese civilisation as a whole. It is, however, a formidable task for any teacher to teach about a phenomenon with a history of between two and a half and three thousand years, despite its relative homogeneity. There is no alternative to being highly selective and to presenting the most significant and enduring features. The problem then is what to select.

The core of any course should perhaps be ideas and institutions, and the point should be made at the outset that China developed the most durable and successful pre-modern social and political system in history, which lasted well into modern time. This entails the study of Confucianism, the ideology which underpinned Chinese state and society for almost two millenia and which still exerts a powerful influence both inside China and on its neighbours. Among its fundamental assumptions are: that man is a social animal and very much of this world, not an individual with a soul whose salvation lies in the next; that human nature is - if not intrinsically good - has the potential to become good through education; that the key human problem is that of social and political order; that men are unequal, and that social and political harmony can only be achieved by a morally superior civil (not military) elite and the acceptance of hierarchy in social and political relations.

It is clear that this tradition of ideas differs fundamentally from that in which Europeans are brought up, and while it should be studied first for its own sake, it offers a good opportunity to provoke European students into reflecting critically on their own social and political assumptions and values.

One example, which is perhaps worth quoting here, concerns the definition of "conservatism". The following is taken from a study by the great American sinologist, Mary Wright, of the Confucian bureaucracy of the last century:

> "The hallmarks of Western conservatism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are belief in a divine intent that governs history; a sense of sin; distrust of reason and faith in 'prescription and sound prejudice'; belief in the sacredness of private property; affection for parochial ways and distrust of cosmopolitanism. By contrast, Chinese conservatism is the defence of a rational, cosmopolitan order, and to a great extent of the very 'radical illusions' that are anathema to Western conservatives: the belief that human history is part of a harmonious and national natural order; willingness to subordinate private property to group interests; belief in man's innate goodness and his perfectibility through moral training; the honouring of custom not as a brake on reason but as the embodiment of reason; and the persistent ideal of the universal state."
>
> (Mary C Wright, "The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism", Stanford 1957, pp. 1-2)

From ideas, the logical progression is to political institutions: the Confucian bureaucracy administering a state which was, throughout its history, always the most populous on earth, and the semi-divine emperor to whom they owed allegiance. One danger to be avoided here is to idealise the traditional state system as European philosophers did during the 17th and 18th centuries. It is possible, for example, to ignore the corruption which was endemic in the system, as they did in their desire to make a contemporary political point. This parallels some Western apologists of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution who ignored its uglier aspects for the same reason.

Of the other elements which could form part of a course on Chinese civilisation, art and literature are worth singling out. The best of both are among the peaks of human achievement, and they are readily accessible in cheap reproductions and modern translations in most European languages.

Chinese painting can perhaps bring home to students more readily than any other medium that they are in a cultural universe very different from their own: its conventions of perspective are quite different as well as its underlying philosophy. The human figure, for example, is generally depicted as an insignificant element in the natural order of things. From here, teachers can move, if they wish, quite naturally into a discussion of Daoism and open up the subject of religion in China.

Chinese literature in the form of the great vernacular novels offers perhaps the easiest access to Chinese culture as a whole. "The Journey to the West" ("Monkey"), besides being one of the great imaginative stories of world literature, gives the teacher the opportunity of introducing, for example, the Chinese political system and religion in all its forms in a painless and amusing way. "The Story of the Stone" ("Dream of the Red Chamber") offers a vivid depiction of family life and social relations in the extended family, which was the Confucian ideal though seldom realised except among the elite.

One other element in Chinese culture which bears mentioning here is science and technology in which China led the world until the European scientific revolution. The list of significant Chinese discoveries and inventions is very long and includes gunpowder, the magnetic compass, the mechanical clock, the seismograph, the printing, the horse harness and the gimbal suspension. Unfortunately, little of the work of scholars like Needham has been put into a form which is useable in schools. The interested teacher must quarry what he wants from their academic publications.

4. PROBLEMS

4.1 Remoteness

Chinese culture is remote from the experience of young Europeans with the exception of Chinese restaurants and kung-fu. One approach which is likely to minimise this difficulty is one based on individual personalities. The life of Mao Zedong, for example, can be used as a key to understanding much of modern, contemporary and even Imperial China, since he was a member of a unique generation whose lives spanned them all. His autobiography as told to Edgar Snow in the 1930's is readily available, and there are good biographies which cover the period from then until his death.

Confucius and his disciples, notably Mencius, are readily accessible through the many translations of their works and extracts from them which are available, and there is sufficient material on emperors (eg Qin Shi Huang or Kang Xi) and bureaucrats, although not necessarily in a form that is directly useable in the classroom.

4.2 Stereotypes

We live in a period when Chinese stereotypes are more often than not negative, whether comic ("no tickee, no shirtee") or sinister (Yellow Peril, Fu Manchu, Blue Ants, Red Guards). The teacher can, however, set them in the context of the changing European conceptions of China during the modern period and stimulate discussion of why they changed. European stereotypes of China were generally very positive until the end of the 18th century. It was believed, for example, that China was a land of great material prosperity or a strong, united self-sufficient state ruled by wise and benevolent rulers, with an idealogy closely akin to christianity.

4.3 Language

i. Script

This may seem an impenetrable barrier and impossibly difficult to teach. It is possible, however, to teach something about the language - the material does exist to enable teachers to do this without any prior knowledge on their part. It should, for example, be possible for the teacher to convey something of the aesthetic appeal of calligraphy, which ranks above painting in the Chinese aesthetic canon.

Language is particularly important because of its absolute centrality to Chinese culture: the root meaning of the Chinese word for culture, "wen", is, in fact, "script" or "language". Language, or rather the script, also played a key part in preserving the unity of Chinese civilisation, both in space and through time.

ii. Romanisation

Chinese names in their romanised form have always been a difficulty in teaching about China. The difficulty has increased in the past few years because the official Chinese romanisation (pinyin) has become the internationally accepted standard for newspapers and books. Teachers and students must now be familiar not only with their own national romanisation (the English-speaking world uses the Wade-Giles system which gives Mao Tse-tung, Tz'u Hsi, Teng Hsiao-p'ing) but also with pinyin (Mao Zedong, Ci Xi, Deng Xiaoping).

4.4 Curricular constraints

There are few, if any, school systems in which the choice of subject matter is free, while individual and institutional inertia combine powerfully to reinforce the status quo. The opportunities for introducing the study of China tend, therefore, to be limited.

Chinese civilisation could probably most easily be introduced inthe early years of most European secondary school courses, when it could be offered in history syllabuses as an alternative option to the early Western and West Asian civilisations that are often studied. In the later years of secondary school, it is only likely to be possible to introduce the study of China in piecemeal fashion, again most probably in history courses, with a bias towards the modern and contemporary periods.

4.5 Resources

There is no shortage of resources, certainly not in English, although as noted above, many are not available in a form which is immediately useable in the classroom with 12-16 year-olds. Teachers have no alternative to extracting the material that they need and putting it in a form which students can readily use.

Not all teachers are in a position to do this, and, for those who are not, the relative lack of ready-made material may be a strong disincentive to teaching about China.

4.6 Teacher unfamiliarity with China

China can be as remote to teachers in Europe as it is to their students. If the study of China is to be introduced on any scale, the most effective way of familiarising teachers with its civilisation both ancient and modern is through in-service training. The problem here is the necessarily limited number of those who are able to give such training.

5. CONCLUSION

"When China, developing the resources of her magnificent domain, and clothing herself with the panoply of modern science, becomes, as she must in the lapse of a century or two, one of the three or four great powers that divide the dominion of the globe, think you that the world will continue to be indifferent to the past of her history? Not only will some knowledge of her history be deemed indispensable to a liberal education; but while I am in the spirit of prophecy, I may go on to predict that ther language and literature will be studied in all our universities."

(the American Sinophile, W A P Martin in "Journal of the Peking Oriental Society", vol. i (1886), p. 135. Quoted in Raymond Dawson, "The Legacy of China", Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 380)

6. SUMMARIES OF THE TALKS

6.1 "Mutual perceptions of China", by Dr Hugh Baker

The Chinese perception of themselves seems a useful starting point. Until the end of the 19th century, they almost certainly did not view China as a country but rather as a culture. In size, China is much larger than Westem Europe, but, unlike Europe, it is not composed of different states under sovereign governments, so that the concept of nationalism was not an obvious one to the Chinese mind. In other respects. there was a clear similarity to the European situation, for China was divided by mutually unintelligible languages and by ways of life which differed from each

other quite as much as those of Finland and Portugal or Yugoslavia and Britain in Europe. And, like Europe of centuries past, China had a lingua franca in its written language which was uniform throughout China and divorced from any of the spoken languages. Peoples outside the Chinese sphere could come within it by adopting Chinese culture. As peoples who had not come within it were known to be barbaric, impoverished and inferior, the superiority of Chinese culture was an accepted fact, which coloured the Chinese attitude to foreign trade, foreign travel and, indeed, foreign intercourse.

Before the large-scale encroachment of the West from the late 18th century onwards, the cultural superiority theory had known little challenge - invaders had successfully conquered China, but almost all had soon been converted to Chinese ways. As the saying goes, "All rivers flowing into the Chinese cultural sea turn salty". The Westerners obstinately refused to become saline, and the Chinese were eventually forced to take them seriously as a real and long-term threat.

They saw nothing admirable. The Westerners were "red-haired" (certainly they were not all black-haired as the Chinese are) and blue-eyed, conforming to Chinese notions of evil spirits or devils. They smelled strongly, had vast quantities of body hair (like monkeys not like people) and behaved in an unseemly manner. They insisted on trying to do trade, something which only the lowliest would consider worthy, and, when China made it quite clear that she neither needed nor wanted foreign produce, they unmasked themselves and began to fight. They were very good at fighting and were able to defeat China repeatedly in battle. Worse still, their missionaries and colonialists began to make attempts at desalination of Chinese culture. Efforts to come to terms with the West were half-hearted or sabotaged by the conservative majority: China was held back from compromise by her conviction that she had a monopoly of morality and civilisation. Even when the Western philosophy of communism provided the impetus for a successful revolution, it was a Chinese form of communism which rejected Western help. Only now does it seem that the Chinese might be conceding that they do not occupy all the high ground in a changed world. China reaches out through trade and diplomacy to seek equality with Europe.

China seen through European eyes has been rather less static a picture than Europe seen through Chinese eyes. When Marco Polo came back from China at the end of the 13th century, he began a long era of Western admiration of the wonders and achievements of China. Europe was as near as ever it would be to sharing the Chinese view of China in the five hundred years up to the beginning of the 19th century. Then, the waning competence of the Manchu Qing dynasty combined with the damages done by the West's own attacks and by the opium which it traded to bring about a China which was no longer admirable. From this time on, European writers talked scornfully of "John Chinaman" and lost no chance of pointing out the humiliations and inferiorities of China. A reluctant admiration returned with the success of the Chinese communists both in pacifying so great a country and in coping with the huge economic and political problems that faced them. Since 1949, China's spectators have blown hot and cold as political movements have come and gone.

Just as China feels constrained to improve her international relations so, whether it admires or despises, Europe cannot ignore the fact that China is now part (and a very big part) of the world. We must have a perception of China. "No man is an island" and no state is either.

6.2 The Chinese identity: what it means to be a Chinese by Dr Zhang Rong

To be a Chinese means that one has a set of distinctive attitudes which are shaped by China's entire historical experience from ancient times up to and including the modern era. This talk will discuss Chinese attitudes in four areas: the nation, the family, education and social relationships.

1. The Nation

1.1 Enormous, even arrogant pride in China's rich cultural heritage. A certain insecurity consequent upon China's forced opening to the West.

1.2 Identification of the nation with its emperor; longing for an all wise god-like ruler.

1.2.1 Emperor's position and function in history:

- supreme power
- wisdom and moral character required
- holds nation together.

1.2.2 The role of Confucianism:

- The Confucian ideal of harmonious and hierarchical society buttresses the emperor's position.

1.2.3 Mao as an emperor-figure during the Cultural Revolution:

- fanatical worship culminating in catastrophe.

2. The family

2.1 The basic social unit:

- cultural importance in Chinese society
- very close family relationships.

2.2 Marked hierarchical structure:

- hierarchy based on the primacy of age
- the Confucian ideal: the family as the microcosm of state
- problems resulting from rigid family structure: young people's feeling of restriction.

2.3 Modern trends:

- family ties less strong and more relaxed as people more mobile
- problem of old people keeping pace with fast developing society
- young people become more assertive
- Mao's encouragement of the young
- still strong respect for old age.

2.4 The Cultural Revolution:

- family relationships under threat of dissolution
- concept of "family love" criticised
- people pressured to denounce family members with "wrong" idealogy.

2.5 The present:

- effort to restore some traditional ideas
- modern trends (2.3) continue.

3. Education

3.1 The place of education and the teacher's role:

- education supremely valued
- teacher traditionally greatly respected
- teacher-student relationship traditionally that of superior-inferior and very formal.

3.2 The educated man (intellectual)

- considered as superior to all other groups
- superiority enhanced by his mastery of very difficult written language
- primacy of the written word and concomitant significance of symbolism in Chinese life.

3.3 The cultural revolution:

- significance of symbols
- rejection of the past eg, burning of books, etc
- teachers and other intellectuals accused of spreading harmful knowledge.

3.4 The present:

- problem of a whole generation of young people without a proper education
- return of traditional values.

4. Social relationships

4.1 Good social relationships more important for Chinese than for Westerners:

- traditional Chinese approach to government stresses code of behaviour rather than written laws
- personal and professional relationships often overlap
- concept of friendship entails absolute loyalty
- importance of ritual
- discrepancy between ideal and reality.

4.2 The Cultural Revolution:

- advocacy of the replacement of "human love" with "class love"
- the central role assigned to "class struggle".

4.3 The present:

- considerable tension and resentment remaining among young people
- effects of the Cultural Revolution's brutalisation of the young
- efforts to revive traditional values.

5. China in the classroom

If European students are to gain more than a superficial acquaintance with China, they must have access to materials which:

- present modern China in historical perspective
- have depth and are readable
- contain interesting stories which make China and the Chinese come alive for them.

7. DISCUSSIONS IN WORKING GROUPS

7.1 Report of Working Group 1

Chairman: Ms Paula Sinikka Sahi

Rapporteur: Mr John Mason

During the first discussion session, it was decided by the group to take a practical approach to the question of teaching about China in secondary schools.

We put ourselves in the shoes of a teacher who has a total of only five hours (ie five 45-50 minute lessons) to devote to the subject of China in a class of 15 year-old students of average ability. What should he teach? How should he teach it?

We divided the subject into five topic areas: geography, language, culture, history and being young in China.

I. Geography

1. Introduction:

   Location of China in the world;

   China in comparison with the USA, USSR etc.

2. Population:

   Latest figures, rates of growth of other countries.

3. Distribution of population:

   Contrast densely and sparsely populated regions;

   why the uneven distribution?

4. Climate:

   Temperature, rainfall etc.

5. Agriculture:

   Major crops - relationship to the soil;

   organisation of agriculture.

6. Natural resources and industrial centres:

   Major raw materials, energy sources etc.

7. Summary:

Emphasise the close relationship between climate, natural resources, agriculture and population. Sources: maps, films statistics.

Two basic principles followed:

a. Use as little materials as possible, so that schools and students have it at their disposal.

b. Concentrate on group work/individual work, so that students are not dependent on information supplied by the teacher.

SUBGROUP ON "LANGUAGE"

Franz Elischberger
Paul Livesey

The aim is to produce a lesson on Chinese Language in such a form that a teacher totally ignorant of the facts can teach it as part of a course on China. We divided the topic into ten sections; each section is based on a OHP (overhead projector) sheet or slide and is divided into four parts as follows:

NO	CORE	RESOURCES	COMMENTS	POSSIBLE EXTENSION OF TOPIC
1.	Non-Chinese signs as Examples of pictorial symbols, eg pedestrian crossing, knife and fork (restaurant), telephone, or sports symbols	Slide or OHP Sheet	Deal with symbols in sequence, letting pupils identify them to show that they are universally recognised	Refer to development of our alphabet from pictographic original
2.	Simple pictorial characters of type: person, sun, moon, tree, pig, etc (Selection to be made with consideration of needs of next category)	Slide of OHP, of characters, including development of tree, sun, fish from original to current form	a. Explain development of tree, sun, fish (referring to teachers' leaflet) b. Allow and encourage pupils to guess meaning of others c. Provide hints if necessary on difficult ones, especially where character is squared off or on side (eg elephant, eye)	Pupils could write some simple characters now with guidance from teacher, who will refer to a section in his/her leaflet

The teachers' leaflet would be very short; it would contain only that material needed to teach this topic. If teachers were sufficiently interested, they could read "About Chinese" by R Newnham (Pelican, 1971).

III. Culture

1. Confucianism (practical and active)

Key words:
a. Harmony - social and political harmony in a universal state
b. Hierarchy - acceptance of hierarchy in social and political relations
c. Obedience - obedience to a morally superior and supreme leader
d. Group - subordination of the individual to the group
e. Learning - importance of education, learning and moral training
f. Code of behaviour - respect for the old, idea of politeness, friendship, self-control
g. Family - tradition - image of family and respect for tradition

2. Art (painting)

Distinctive characteristics:

1. use of shifting perspectives
2. use of monochrome ink/sparse use of colour
3. large blank areas
4. small size of human figures
5. sketchy qualities

A good way to appreciate these distinctive features of Chinese paintings is to compare specific paintings with those from a western country.

Sources: poems, stories, slides, film, paintings.

IV. History

One of the best ways to approach Chinese history is through the biography of a leader - eg Mao Zedong.

A short outline of the life of Mao Zedong

- born 1893 Hunan province, Imperial China at this time - backwardness and decay before Revolution of 1911;
- son of rich peasant;
- early years: teacher and librarian;
- 1921, founder of Chinese Communist Party;
- Mao's early ideas about communism:
  . role of the peasant;
  . the Long March (1934-36);

- Mao's struggle for power:
  . war with Japan (1937-45);
  . civil war - the importance of guerilla warfare;

- Mao - leader of Communist China (1949-1976)

- Mao and the Cultural Revolution - an attempt to mould a new man and society.

V. Being young in China

1. At Home

Story: "The foolish old man who moved the mountain"
Question: "What does the story tell me about the Chinese family?"

- extended family together under the same roof;
- little privacy - share rooms and facilities;
- toleration, mixture of age-groups.

2. At school in the city

The school day:

- begins at eight (summer);

- lessons last 45 minutes;

- pupils do eye exercises (20 minutes) after the second lesson. Why? Writing is tiring, and the exercises help to correct the vision (students do the exercises themselves);

- hot meal for lunch - pupils pay;

- siesta in summer (12:00-15:00) pupils sleep on makeshift beds in big room;

- two lessons after lunch until 17:00;

- after-class activities (45 minutes) games, sports.

School subjects

- subjects similar to European ones: science, maths, music, arts, physical exercise;

- Chinese language - emphasis on the written work characters written on board - pupils memorise them;

- politics - Marxist-Leninist philosophy, readings from newspapers etc;

- little debate in school. Teacher is highly respected and seen as a model;

- much homework.

3. Leisure activities

Little spare time - because of home work and duties at home:

- Children watch television;
- children play sports: football, basketball, volleyball, table tennis, badminton;
- children play traditional Chinese games: fly kites, spin tops.

4.2 Report of Working Group 2

Chairperson: Mr Thor-Martin Antonsen/Ms Isabel Costa

Rapporteur: Ms Mary van de Water

1. In discussing the list of conference questions, a wide variety of views were aired which reflected the various situations in which teachers work. One point of particular significance was whether one taught about China because of its inherent importance and interest or because, being an exotic subject, it has instrumental values which allow a teacher to introduce various important issues. We did not agree on either of these as being of primary importance. We could agree that the specific situation within the classroom might dictate to some extent the reason why China is being taught.

2. Next, we set ourselves the task of putting into words what exactly we could expect a European school-leaver to know about China by the time he/she leaves school. Constraints and methods of realising these objectives were not to be considered at this point.

What we would expect a European school-leaver to know about China when they leave school

Facts and information:

a. Topographical knowledge - where China is (try to give a real sense of this), how big China is (the variety of natural resources, potential uses of the land, eg for agriculture etc), characterisitics of the land.

b. Demographic information - size and distribution of population, age breakdown of population.

c. A concrete idea of daily life today - shelter, diet, work, leisure, eduation.

d. A knowledge of Chinese history is necessary for an appreciation of Chinese life. We defined history as a knowledge of the development of social systems in relation to the physical world.

e. Lastly, the pupils must be able to use their information and appreciation of China to bear on some major issues, which themselves are key issues for China. We would expect some comparisons with cultures known by the pupils at first hand to emerge in this section. The specific issues might vary from country to country, teacher to teacher. However, the following are a few examples that we felt we might use:

- population expansion, the consequences of it including immigration, imperialism, expansionism, etc;
- how major projects (eg the building of the Great Wall) influence social organisation;
- urban/peasant relations.

We decided not to discuss the issue of how to teach all of the above content from the point of view of age (13-15, 16-19 for example), or from the point of view of subject area since this was already being done by other groups. However, it has become apparent in discussions that another aspect was important. How would a school with a fairly free hand do it? We planned how we could satisfy the objectives in what we called the Eight-Hour Constraint Model where teachers have only eight hours in all to teach this. Two plans resulted:

i. One group decided that it would be essential to stimulate considerable pupil enthusiasm and would initially use video, current articles, question and answer sessions, films, slides, artefacts, etc, to initiate the study. Next, they would pose the question of travel methods which could be used, how long would it take, how long to cross the country, what land forms would be seen while doing this, what kinds of soils, agriculture, signs of natural resources (mining etc) would be seen. After this, the group would try to gain some insight into the population density in China by considering how all the different kinds of land and resources already observed were being used by the people. They would note where to live, how much food they would need, where it would come from, what it would be, how much it would cost. Some knowledge of family planning in China would come in. The aspects of life concerned with medicine and education would be raised.

With this as background, the next step would be some sort of historical view which would take as its starting point the relationship between land forms and the social patterns which grow out of it. Farmers, landlords and the tax system in relations to government would come up. The civil wars in China might come in here. Looking at history from the expansion point of view from 221 BC to 1949 would be the underlying approach.

Next, a detailed look at agriculture would occur, including all the obvious aspects, but making sure to bring up the question of environmental awareness in China and the question of whether China could be a suitable model for the Third World.

Lastly, a look at energy forms, metals, communications, industry and handicrafts would be important. The problem China has of developing her industry and science and connection with the developed world would round off the eight hours.

ii. This group would introduce topographical and demographic information in the first lesson by using either slides or film. The lesson would be one of seeing considerable information and recording it on a work-sheet, at the centre of which would be a map of China. Around this map would be boxes into which various of the more important features would be noted. Some would be left for the pupils to decide and fill in as homework.

The purpose of providing a great deal of visual information is to give the pupils something to draw on since it is intended that much of the information and analysis will come out of the pupils themselves.

In the next lesson, the pupils will use the pictures they have provided for themselves to develop some idea of the people of China. Then three case studies will be set up. One a peasant, another a provincial town worker and the third an urban intellectual. These case studies would be very concrete with names and possibly even a definite photo. The remaining time would be used to elicit from the pupils the kinds of shelter and food that their case studies would have.

In the next lesson, a Chinese visitor would say something about work, leisure and education. Then, in the time remaining, these three aspects would be discussed in relation to the case studies. In the fifth lesson, each of the case studies would be considered in relation to the history (as defined).

Finally, in the last lesson two main issues would be raised, and a straightforward discussion about each of them would take place. We feel that one issue ought to touch on religion, and another bear on economic/political aspects.

3. Our last task was to compile a list of things which we, as teachers, would like to have available in connection with teaching about China.

i. Games; crosswords - the solution would be Chinese words, pinyin. The various languages would be used for clues (given in simple English - teacher to translate); a game such as "Catastrophe" to get over the idea of various population development problems; a "snakes and ladders" type of game of the Long March; two jigsaw maps, one simple with keyed pieces for ease and another in square pieces as a challenge to information knowledge; "find the meaning" of some easily apparent characters.

ii. Activities: Chinese comics, some colouring in sheets (Beijing opera masks), simulations, how to use the abacus.

iii. We would like posters showing: Chinese art, traditional history, agriculture, modern and old-fashioned industry, open markets, inside a house, inside a kindergarten, faces, stamps, a satellite photo of China. It might be a good idea to have posters with a broad, plain border for writing on and adding comments.

iv. We would like a cassette of music with samples of traditional Chinese music, Beijing opera, present pop music, movie music, etc. Simple notes should be included.

v. We would like a box of slides, so that each teacher can pick and choose and use them in her own way. Areas of life to be covered should include daily life, land features, handicrafts, kite flying. Naturally, all obvious aspects should be handled.

vi. A card with samples of various things in tiny cellophane envelopes would be very useful - eg of the different kinds of grain, of various common fibres.

vii. Samples of some peasant window papers as a suggestion to pupils of how to make some for themselves.

viii. Samples of easy paper cuts and some simple instructions of how to do some.

ix. Some examples of interesting Chinese inventions with illustrations - possibly to be used for colouring in, historical comparisons etc, eg the earthquake detector.

x. Samples of some of the Green Pine Village type peasant paintings would be useful as a starting point for pupil work.

xi. Some simple recipes with clear details of how to make the dish would be useful. Only recipes using readily available European raw materials should be given.

xii. Annotated bibliography of teaching materials, not extensive, and fairly simple and to the point.

4.3 Report of Working Group 3

Chairperson: Mr Ragnar Baldursson

Rapporteur: Mr Donald MacDonald

1. Coverage of China in Western European schools

In general, only a minority of pupils are ever likely to encounter detailed material about China. Thus, Swedish pupils, for example, would come across China in both history and geography, but on a rather superficial level. Italian pupils, too, would hear about Chinese history, but only in their final year of schooling. A common feature is for Chinese history to be available as an option, for pupils in the 16 plus age range. This was referred to by representatives from Norway, Scotland and the Länder of Nordrhein-Westfalen, Bremen and Baden-Wurttemberg.

2. Justifications for teaching about China

There was support for the idea that, for teachers wanting to cover certain demographic and political concepts (eg population growth and limitation, conflict, revolution), China might be seen as an essential example. Again, it was suggested that, for any course entitled "World History", it would be wrong to exclude China. On a more basic level, the group felt that China also has relevance for the general education of the average citizen in Western Europe, on the grounds that China represents the oldest, large-scale uninterrupted culture in the entire world.

3. What European children should learn about China

i. At first, discussion on this topic became rather bogged down in the question of different national curricula and local details of organisation. Eventually, however, the group agreed to focus attention on two teaching possibilities: first, a short general course of 6-10 lessons for the 13-15 age group; and second, a longer and more specialised course for students in the 17-19 age range.

ii. Before discussing the details of these proposed courses, we spent some time debating questions of "culture" and "values". We tended to favour a broad interpretation of culture, which would include both "high culture" (eg painting, literature) and everyday matters (diet, dress). We also favoured a strong link between visible cultural features and the value problems which often lie behind these features. For example, Chinese food preferences are often linked to the need to make use of all available food sources in a country where natural hazards and widespread famine have been common in the past. Again, Chinese clothing preferences are obviously related to the high value placed on modesty of appearance (particularly for women). The point was also made that every culture tends to favour particular styles of thinking, and Western children should know, for instance, that Chinese culture allows written thoughts which have no absolutely clear or precise meanings. Western culture, of course, does not favour such a system.

iii. The preparation of a course outline for 13-15 year-old pupils began with the identifying of two main aims.

First, that we should pass on a general (but inevitably superficial) knowledge of China and her culture.

Second, that we should promote international understanding in terms of open-minded attitudes towards China.

The course would contain an inter-disciplinary element, although it might be taught mainly from history or a geography basis. Obviously, if it were organised on a more integrated basis, with political and aesthetic viewpoints also included, it would tend to be considerably longer than the 6-10 periods suggested earlier. At any rate, the course would cover both selected facts and social values, as listed below:

Essential facts	Social values
Location	The family
Large extent	Human friendship
Large population	The state
Diversity	Continuity
Continuity of civilisation	Learning
Distinctive political system	
Planned economy	
Individuality, despite mass conciousness	

To cover these, and to fulfil the aims stated previously, we suggested the following sequence:

Introduction: As a starter, to stimulate pupil interest, teachers might look specifically at the Chinese system of writing or a small sample of aesthetic material (music or visual art). Alternatively, the teacher could begin by collecting pupil notions about China or pupil reactions to China. Using this latter approach, the teacher would then adapt the lessons on China to take account of these pupil notions and reactions. Most of the group felt that the introductory phase should also involve finding China on the world map and looking at the country's basic physical features.

Family Li: The next stage is to see some concrete details of everyday life and to relate them to Chinese culture in general. The idea of using a family (real or imaginery) was suggested for this purpose, although some members of the group were not enthusiastic about such a choice. It was, they felt, an artificial, childish and tiresome method. For those in favour of the Li family, a case example of this type seemed to offer opportunities for referring to diet (which relates both to Chinese agriculture and to social value systems); clothing; schooling (showing that a 15 year old student in China still has to learn to write new characters); employment; the family size (linked to national demography).

Wider issues: Using education as a link we can move from the family Li to the general culture of China and its very long history. For instance, the Chinese writing system can take us back to the Imperial bureaucracy and its system of entrance examinations. From there we can refer briefly to some ideas of Confucianism and then to the ideas of Marxism-Leninism. As political systems have changed, so too have economic systems, and we can guide children to understand that China has moved through three major phases: a lengthy period of technical sophistication when China led the world; a period of stagnation and underdevelopment, under external domination; and a current period of five-year plans, with gradual modernisation.

Assessment: Not all group members approved of final assessment. Some seem not to favour assessment much under any circumstances, while others thought that a short course of this type could only be tested through simple recall questions, which do nothing to test attitude changes in pupils.

iv. Our next step was to consider a different type of school course, designed for older pupils. In this case we suggested four possibilities, any of which could take up a period as short as 18-20 lessons, or as long as a complete term. These studies would be optional, would involve much individual work in considerable depth, using a variety of printed sources plus videotapes plus colour slides.

The four possible lines of approach were history, philosophy, geography, and integrated social studies. In the case of history, for example, some attention might be paid to the development of political thought, culminating in the current Chinese variation of Marxism-Leninism. Again, in the case of integrated social studies, a selective use would be made of historical and cultural material. In this type of course, collaboration between teachers can be extremely important. Since teachers will sometimes need to cover unfamiliar ground, the availability of printed materials is essential. Iceland and Italy reported deficiencies in this respect, while Sweden and Federal Republic of Germany reported generally adequate facilities (eg the Kreisbildstelle).

Whatever the chosen line of approach, the aims here are similar to those identified for the younger age group, while incorporating a much deeper understanding of the historical continuum in China and a greater awareness of China's changing status in global terms (past, present and future). In conclusion, we also noted that these studies of Chinese history and culture would form, for a tiny minority of students, a springboard for more advanced studies beyond school.

4. Some final reflections on international understanding

On the general question of furthering international understanding between Europe and China, the group agreed that to be worthwhile and effective this must be a two-way process. There is little evidence at present that Chinese education is making an effort in this direction. Chinese attitudes are obviously ambivalent. China needs western technology, but regards modern European values and behaviour as mainly dangerous and vulgar. For Europeans, at the same time, it often comes as a surprise to learn that they and their culture are viewed by the Chinese as clearly inferior.

In the light of these problems, this group puts forward a two-stage proposal:

i. the Council of Europe should approach the Chinese authorities, with a view to collaborating in the development of teaching materials for use in European schools.

ii. the Council might (depending on the success of the first stage) promote a reverse form of the same process, so that materials on Europe might become more freely available to Chinese educators.

8. FINAL COMMENTS BY THE DIRECTOR

This Donaueschingen seminar began as a forum for discussion on the possible justifications for teaching about China in European secondary schools. It rapidly changed, however, into a teacher's workshop with a clear aim: to produce outlines of a course containing the minimum that the European secondary school student could reasonably be expected to know about China on reaching the legal school leaving age.

The seminar developed in this way partly in response to the promptings of the opening session of Mr Maitland Stobart, Head of the Council of Europe's School Education Division, but also because participants felt little need to debate

at length the case for including China in the European curriculum. Most were teaching about China already, although the time available for it varied considerably from country to country, and felt that the main arguments for doing so had been covered reasonably fully in the previously circulated discussion paper (Section 2). The consensus was, and remained, that the European school-leaver should know about China because the political and economic significance of one quarter of humanity in the world today and for the future could not be ignored.

As the final plenary session drew relentlessly nearer, it was clear to everyone that there was neither enough time nor sufficient human or material resources on China available at the seminar to make possible the production of anything more than tentative course outlines. Nevertheless, despite these constraints, the participants produced an extremely valuable set of guidelines and suggestions of which any curriculum planner would do well to take note.

They reflect the appreciation of the need for an historical perspective and cultural depth which developed during the seminar and of the desirability to teaching China as a cultural whole. The outline teaching unit put together by Mr Franz Elischberger and Mr Paul Livesey is perhaps worth particular mention: it should enable a teacher who has no prior knowledge of the Chinese written language to give his students a worthwhile grasp of some of its main features. It is hoped that a consolidated summary of the outlines produced by the seminar, which will include this unit, will be separately printed at a later date.

At the end of the seminar, there was general agreement that the task of deciding what the average European school-leaver should know about China was far from complete and that some means of continuing what had been started at Donaueschingen should be found.

One suggestion was for a follow-up seminar which would be planned as a workshop from the outset and be serviced with sufficient specialist input and resources. This would aim to flesh out and refine the work done at Donaueschingen.

The syllabus or syllabuses on China produced in this way could, however, only form a basis which individual teachers in different countries would need to adapt to their own situation and needs. To do this they need advice and encouragement from specialists. Since such specialists are to be found mainly in the sinological departments of Europe's universities and institutions, there may well be a role for the Council of Europe in encouraging academic sinologists to help teachers develop their own expertise on China and to monitor any teaching materials which they might produce.

Some participants, for example those in Group III, were particularly anxious to see genuine two-way cultural exchange between Europe and China in the hope that collaboration in the development of teaching materials might eventually take place. However unrealistic that hope may appear to be in present circumstances, it is something that the Council of Europe could usefully raise with the Chinese authorities. The possibility of a study-visit by European teachers to China as a first step is certainly worth considering.

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